The notion of borderland is ambiguous and complex. A. Kłosowska proposes a definition according to which borderland is an area situated between two state or regional territories that is characterised by ethnic or national heterogeneity being a consequence of geographical closeness. In a broader sense, borderland means proximity of cultures resulting from mixed genealogy, marriage or the existence of ethnic or national minorities within a territory dominated by one nationality. It can also be connected with immigration or with national self-determination, that is change of individual nationality without severing the ties with the native culture.\(^1\) Borderland territories come into being when two or more socio-economic and cultural systems meet. In terms of socio-political organisation, borderland is a periphery, spatially distant from the centre where all power is concentrated. Borderlands, as peripheral areas, play a marginal role.\(^2\)

The purpose of this publication is to analyse how border societies and cultures function and to indicate the major changes that are occurring in these regions at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Bearing in mind that the issue of borderland areas is of interest to many fields of science, the publication includes articles written by economists, sociologists and politologists. This variety of perspectives allows a multi-faceted insight into different areas of development of borderland regions.

The monograph consists of eleven papers. Among other things, they indicate the social and economic problems of development of border areas (Artur Paździor, Zdzisław Jakubowski, Karolina Twardziak, Ewa Sadowska). Other discussed topics are: the impact of Polish accession to the European Union and to the Schengen Area on the situation of the eastern borderland of Poland (Mirosława Laszuk) and the development opportunities of the eastern border areas deriving from their cultural and natural amenities (Halina Kiryluk, Joanna Godlewska). The

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monograph also addresses political issues – one of the papers discusses political participation of citizens of selected North-Eastern border areas in the years 2001-2007. As the theme of borderland (its economic and social aspects) is becoming increasingly popular, one should hope that this monograph, directed to a wide circle of readers who are interested in the problems of borderland areas, will significantly contribute to the debates and polemics on the issues presented herein.